

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	24-OPT-02
Project Title:	Compass Energy Storage Project
TN #:	262863
Document Title:	Community Outreach Update
Description:	N/A
Filer:	Erin Phillips
Organization:	Dudek
Submitter Role:	Applicant Consultant
Submission Date:	4/30/2025 8:19:49 AM
Docketed Date:	4/30/2025

April 30, 2025

Via Email and CEC Docket 24-OPT-02

Commissioner Noemi Gallardo
Drew Bohan, Executive Director
California Energy Commission
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
CommissionerGallardo@energy.ca.gov
drew.bohan@energy.ca.gov

RE: Community Outreach Update for the Compass Energy Storage Project

Dear Commissioner Gallardo and Executive Director Bohan:

On behalf of ENGIE North America (ENGIE), we are pleased to update the California Energy Commission (CEC) on our ongoing community outreach efforts for the Compass Energy Storage Project.

ENGIE has prioritized transparent engagement with local stakeholders throughout our state and local permitting efforts to ensure their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed. This update outlines our proactive outreach activities, our engagement with local, county and state fire authorities to meet rigorous safety standards, and the mechanisms we have employed to inform and involve the community. The outreach efforts below do not include the thousands of hours spent with local stakeholder groups, elected officials and other interested parties *prior* to submission of the Compass Energy Storage Project to the CEC Opt-in permitting process.

This letter also responds to the letter submitted by Best, Best and Krieger (“BBK Letter”) on behalf of the City of San Juan Capistrano, dated March 28, 2025, which unfortunately misrepresented ENGIE’s community benefits program for the Compass Project.

Community Outreach Efforts

ENGIE is committed to engaging with all stakeholders, regardless of their position on our project. Over the last four years, our commitment (and our actions) have had our team out in the community, sharing project information to anyone who asks for it, whether they are supporters, opponents or simply community members seeking the facts. Throughout this process, our focus has been on building understanding about the project (purpose, benefits, and safety measures) and addressing concerns about the Compass Energy Storage Project to the greatest degree we can, knowing that some stakeholders will simply never support our efforts. We have provided in-person meetings and virtual briefings to a wide range of stakeholders and our outreach has been informed by a commitment to transparency and responsiveness, ensuring everyone understands

both the necessity of energy storage for California's clean energy future and our dedication – and robust in-the-field track record – to safety and environmental stewardship.

1. Collaboration with local, county, and state fire officials

Safety is our top priority, and we have worked closely with local, county, and state officials to ensure the Compass Energy Storage Project meets and exceeds the highest fire safety standards. Key aspects of this collaboration include:

- Development of a comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan, Community Risk Assessment and draft Emergency Response Plan to be finalized with the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA). These documents have been drafted and reviewed with county representatives, incorporating regular fire and safety training for first responders.
- Working with fire officials to ensure the project meets all UL 1973, UL 9540, NFPA 855 and other existing or planned fire safety standards for this project.
- Implementation of advanced safety features, such as lithium-ion phosphate (LFP) batteries with integrated Battery Management Systems (BMS) for real-time monitoring and automatic shutdown, cooling systems, infrared cameras, and air quality monitors.
- Design distinctions that make this project very different from previous projects that experienced incidents, including an outdoor design plan, appropriate access points, and a 10-foot non-combustible perimeter wall to contain onsite risks and protect against external wildfires.

This partnership ensures that the project aligns with state and local fire authority rules and regulations, providing robust protection for surrounding neighborhoods.

2. Stakeholders Engaged

To date, we have completed briefings and meetings with a diverse array of stakeholders across the following categories:

- Environmental Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Local Government Elected Officials and Staff
- State and Federal Government Agencies
- Tribal Leaders
- Local Trade and Labor organizations
- Direct service community organizations
- Residents and Neighborhood Groups

Additional meetings are scheduled or in process with other stakeholders and will be reported in future updates. Key topics covered in the briefings and meetings include the non-exhaustive list below:

- **Project Overview:** The design, location and rationale for site selection for the 250-megawatt capacity, use of state-of-the-art LFP batteries, and the project's role in meeting energy demand growth, enhancing grid reliability, and lowering energy costs by leveraging renewable sources.
- **Addressing Community Concerns:** Detailed responses to questions around fire safety, air and water quality, potential emissions, visual impacts, and more.
- **Economic and Community Benefits:** Creation of good-paying jobs, generation of over \$50 million in local sales and property tax revenue, and negotiations for Community Benefit Agreements to support local organizations.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Reduction of carbon emissions, improved air quality, and utilization of disturbed land to avoid sensitive habitats, with 28 acres of the 41-acre parcel preserved as open space.

We welcome input and are available to respond to any issues raised by the community. It is also important to note that many early letters opposing the project were submitted before we had an opportunity to engage with communities on the ground and thus, in many cases are based on generic opposition to the project location and perceived safety risks, with any correlation to our specific project proposal. A list of the meetings, organizations and briefings will be provided to the CEC as a Confidential "Attachment A" for reasons outlined below.

3. Tele-town Hall Event

On Wednesday, February 26, 2025, ENGIE hosted a Tele-town Hall event, contacting residents in Laguna Niguel and San Juan Capistrano, via telephone, to provide information about the Compass Energy Storage Project and answer questions. The event featured a panel including ENGIE representatives, as well as a fire engineer and safety expert; hundreds of local residents attended the 90-minute call. ENGIE plans to have additional direct outreach meetings with local residents in the near future.

4. Support Petition

ENGIE recently launched a petition to solicit community support for the project. (<https://compassenergystorage.com/support-petition/>). The petition provides details about the project location and design as well as highlighting the project benefits, supporting grid reliability, economic growth, and sustainability. In just over five weeks, ENGIE has received more than 250 support signatures from local residents for the project, with the numbers increasing daily. These supporters were informed at the time of signing that the petition and their personal information

would be submitted to the CEC. However, due to the ongoing intimidation directed at those who are associated with the project (as noted below), we are providing the names and locations of the Support Petition signatories to the CEC as “Attachment B”, with corresponding phone numbers and addresses redacted. An unredacted version of the list will be provided to the CEC as “Attachment C” under its confidentiality provisions. We hope that the CEC understands the level of discretion that is necessary, given recent circumstances.

5. Digital Outreach Campaign

ENGIE has been using its website and digital outreach efforts to alert and educate residents in San Juan Capistrano and Laguna Niguel about the project. Interested residents are directed to the Compass Energy Storage project website (<https://compassenergystorage.com>) for detailed information about the proposal, as well as to the CEC Docket. This ensures that the public obtains accurate information about the project and provides an opportunity for viewers to indicate their support.

6. Community Benefits Program

Unfortunately, BBK’s letter of March 28, 2025, alleges that ENGIE’s community benefits plan, submitted in 2024, somehow misrepresented the state of play at that time. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 2024, Unidos of South OC and the Boys & Girls Club of Capistrano Valley were among several organizations in negotiations with ENGIE on the scope and nature of proposed community benefits agreements. At that time, and to the present day, ENGIE remains committed to working with the City to identify where Engie funding could be directed in order to support community improvements that are priorities of the City.

Since February of 2025, the City has refused to engage with ENGIE in any discussions of community benefits. In addition, both Unidos South OC and the Boys & Girls Club of Capistrano Valley appear to have been besieged by an intense public campaign, as well as pressure from City officials, designed to intimidate them into declining to follow through with community benefits agreements that had been proposed - or face significant consequences. For example, within 24 hours after ENGIE shared the names of these two organizations with the City Manager and two Council members, both of those organizations withdrew themselves from consideration of a donation. While ENGIE regrets that both groups have withdrawn from negotiations, ENGIE certainly understands how a non-profit that depends on community support may be conflict averse.

In addition, ENGIE has repeatedly offered to provide a briefing and answer questions at community meetings in Laguna Niguel organized by local opponents to the project. These opponents have repeatedly refused to allow ENGIE to attend or participate in those community meetings. Regardless, we remain committed to offering briefings to any groups or individuals who are available.

ENGIE has moved on to several other community-based organizations and has finalized one of its agreements with the South Orange County Community College District to support programs at Saddleback College, and is presently finalizing several other community benefits agreements with qualified local organizations. Given active attempts to interfere with those pending contractual relationships, however, ENGIE will not provide an update to those negotiations here but instead will submit executed agreements when they are final.

Next Steps

ENGIE remains committed to working collaboratively with the CEC, local, county, and state fire agencies, the City of San Juan Capistrano, local communities and residents, and all stakeholders as we advance the Compass Energy Storage Project. We welcome the Commission's feedback and stand ready to provide additional information as needed to support the review process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Renée L. Robin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Renée" being more prominent.

Renée L. Robin, J.D.
Director, Permitting and Planning
ENGIE North America
Renewable and Flex Power

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Local and Statewide Outreach Meetings – Confidential to CEC Docket
- Attachment B: Support Petition (redacted) – Filed separately to CEC Docket
- Attachment C: Support Petition (unredacted) – Confidential to CEC Docket

Cc: Eric Knight, Opt-in Program Manager, CEC
Renee Longman, Project Manager, CEC